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SUBJECT: G-24 DIPLOMATS CRITICIZE UNHCHR REP FRUHLING'S  
ANNUAL REPORT AS LACKING BALANCE

Classified By: Political Counselor. Reasons: 1.4(b) and (d).

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Summary  
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11. (SBU) On February 23, Departing Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Bogota Director Michael Fruhling presented his annual report on human rights in Colombia to members of the Group of 24. The overwhelming reaction was that the report was unbalanced because it failed to note positive developments over the last year and did not provide sufficient guidance to the GOC on required next steps. End summary.

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Report Lacks Balance  
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12. (U) About 35 members of the diplomatic corps were present at the presentation of OHCHR's annual human rights report on February 23. Representatives from the regional OHCHR offices of Cali, Medellin and Bucaramanga were also present. While many praised the value of the report, all said it highlighted the problems with human rights in Colombia without noting positive changes over the past year or indicating what work the GOC was doing to address the problems.

13. (SBU) The Swiss Ambassador said the report should be more careful to outline improvements by the GOC. The Norwegian Charge d'Affaires said he wanted to know why the OHCHR was asking the GOC to establish a National Action Plan on human rights, when there was already a plan being negotiated under the follow-up framework of the 27 HCHR recommendations. The Italian Ambassador said the section of the report that focused on violations of privacy did not include actions the GOC had taken to address alleged violations. The representative from Canada said it would be useful to see what the UNHCHR thought the GOC should do to improve the situation. The EU representative said it would be better to have a balanced list of criticisms with answers from the GOC on what they were doing to confront the criticisms.

14. (SBU) D/Polcouns noted one would need a magnifying glass to find positive comments on developments in the past year. For example, the report did not seem to specify the decreases in violence indicators like homicides, kidnappings and victims of massacres, or that in every area where there has been a demobilization of paramilitary groups there has been a decrease in violence. Fruhling responded that the positive

information was clearly marked in paragraphs 22 and 23 of the report, and in footnote number 80 in Annex V of the report. (The report is 151 pages long. Paragraphs 22 and 23 are qualified general statements that do not mention statistics.)

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Fruhling Insists He Was Successful  
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15. (C) Fruhling discussed at length how he believed the report accurately reflected the human rights climate in Colombia and said OHCHR had put considerable work into observing human rights cases in the field. He said he believed his office has had an impact because when he raised issues of concern -- such as cases of extrajudicial killings or torture -- the GOC took them seriously. His remarks, however, failed to convince the audience that the purpose of the report was to guide the GOC, rather than criticize. Fruhling plans to depart Colombia at the end of February. Visiting OHCHR director of field operations Fabrizio Hoschchild told Polcouns on February 15 that he would welcome suggestions from the U.S. on Fruhling's replacement.  
WOOD